



# Asbestos Cement (AC) Sewer Pipe

City of Olympia | Capital of Washington State

As part of the West Bay Force Main project, the City will replace some sections of older asbestos cement (AC) sewer pipe. This will require the removal of the existing AC pipe in some areas to accommodate the new sewer pipe, and the “abandonment” (leaving the pipe in place) of the AC pipe in other locations.

## BACKGROUND

Prior to 1975, AC pipe was widely used for water and sewer mains throughout the United States. When in good condition, these pipes are perfectly safe. As they age, they can break down. This raises questions about possible hazards particularly in drinking water.

Several health organizations studied the health effects of asbestos in drinking water and there is no consistent evidence of adverse health effects.

## REGULATIONS

Federal Regulations require monitoring for asbestos in drinking water. The City of Olympia is required to collect one sample, from our distribution system that contains asbestos pipe every 9 years. The City collected its most recent sample in 2009, and detected no asbestos.

## WORKING WITH AC PIPE

The more serious health concern is associated with inhaling asbestos fibers when an AC pipe is exposed.

The City strictly follows State Regulations when working with or near any AC pipe. Workers involved in AC pipe removal must be certified to perform that work and follow special procedures to prevent asbestos fibers from becoming airborne. All asbestos containing material must be properly tracked and shipped to a certified disposal site.

Due to the hazards associated with disturbing AC Pipe, the safest alternative is to leave it in place whenever possible. The City standard for AC pipe abandonment is to flush the pipe in place, fill the pipe with a flowable cement, and cap the ends.

Although there are no regulations that require mapping of abandoned underground AC pipe, the City does maintain this information in our utility mapping system.

Anyone planning to dig in the City’s right-of-way can request information about possible AC pipes near their work site.

For more information about asbestos and asbestos cement pipe click on the following links:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/dangermat/asbestos.html>

<http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/index.html>